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## Cast Off / American Artist

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## Poetry by Meg Johnson

### Cast Off

Queen of the cast off  
you reign over the only two  
people ever seen on the fire  
escape. First, the man smoking.  
Then, the woman crying.

You reign over forgotten stuffed  
animals, swollen ankles, torn dollar  
bills, people called stupid Americans.

You are the gentlest parole officer  
for the dogs with no faces.

Royal of grease, of alley way break  
ups. Of oblivious children and careless  
fathers. Of fake IDs and awkward  
voicemails. The lonely people  
pretending to look at their phones.

You thought monarchy would be  
something different than this broken  
block. You thought wrong.

### American Artist

I thought doing a naked Mexican Hat Dance would be great...except I wasn't totally  
naked because I had a hat...and people were confused about why I didn't have clothes  
on... *And*, as someone pointed out, I'm actually Czech, so what business do I have  
doing a Mexican Hat Dance?

Don't they get it? I'm trying to push the boundaries of art. I'm going for the *unexpected*.  
I'm trying to recreate *modern society*. Didn't they read the program notes?

Is that what they want? An artless society? Because let me tell you, in Europe people  
appreciate the symbolism of a naked Mexican Hat Dance.

**BIO:** *Meg Johnson is the author of the full length poetry collection Inappropriate Sleepover (The National Poetry Review Press, 2014) which was recently a NewPagesEditor's Pick. Her poems have appeared in Hobart, Nashville Review, The Puritan, Sugar House Review, Verse Daily, and others. Meg started dancing at a young age and worked professionally in the performing arts for many years. She is the editor of Dressing Room Poetry Journal and recently received her MFA in creative writing from the NEOMFA Program. She is working on her second full length collection which has been a finalist in book contests. Meg is currently a lecturer at Iowa State University. Her website is: [megjohnson.org](http://megjohnson.org) and she blogs at: [megjohnsonmegjohnson.blogspot.com](http://megjohnsonmegjohnson.blogspot.com)*